

June 11, 2019

The Honorable Derek Merrin, Chair  
House Health Committee  
77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Merrin,

On behalf of Delta Dental of Ohio, thank you for the opportunity to offer written proponent testimony on House Bill 11, legislation sponsored by Representatives Manning and Howse that would provide for additional dental care and education for pregnant Medicaid recipients.

Ensuring pregnant Medicaid recipients have appropriate dental care and education will help to provide the best possible start in life to some of the most vulnerable Ohioans. It will also help families understand the critical link that oral health has to overall health and the importance of establishing healthy habits.

Expecting mothers have a lot to think about during pregnancy, but one thing that should not be put on the back burner is their oral health. Changing hormone levels can make pregnant women more susceptible to oral health problems like periodontal (gum) disease. Hormonal changes can also cause an increase in blood flow to the gums, resulting in inflammation, sensitivity, and bleeding. In fact, between 60 and 75 percent of women will develop gingivitis during pregnancy. Pregnant women with untreated gum disease may be at a higher risk of premature deliveries and low birthweight. In addition, serious dental problems can develop further, including tooth decay and tooth loss. Visiting the dentist while pregnant is important and safe. These are just some of the reasons why it is important for pregnant Medicaid recipients in Ohio to be eligible for two dental cleanings per year and education about the importance of prenatal and postnatal dental care, as provided by House Bill 11.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for House Bill 11. Delta Dental of Ohio looks forward to working with you and members of the House Health Committee to improve the oral health of all Ohioans.

Sincerely,



Erika Cybulskis